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SIGHT-SEEING IN GERMANY.

(CONCLUDED.)

The two last letters of this phantasmagoric correspondence having been rescued from the waste-paper basket, where they may very justly be said to have found their proper level, the order of our sight-seeing has been somewhat disturbed—that is to say, the description of it. Three weeks ago we were at Ghent, on our road home, when suddenly, perhaps much to the reader's surprise and disappointment, we returned to Wiesbaden, Liepsic, and Dresden.

There's a story told of two North country men, who had left their native hills, and were journeying southward. They had traveled some distance together, when one of them woke the other in the middle of the night by crying out, "Sawnie, I've had an awfu' dream." "Aye, man, what was it?" replied Sawnie. "Eh, Sawnie, I dreamt we were gaun back agen!"

Sawnie reassured his friend, and I likewise reassure the readers of the *Musical World:* we are not "gaun back agen." The two last letters were intended to have been the first of the series, but somehow or other got mislaid. This explanation, moreover, is necessary, in case any one, having had the curiosity to trace our route upon the map, has got confused by doing so.

There will be no more "harking back." It only remains to be told what we saw in Antwerp, Calais, and Boulogne, and our sight-seeing will then be at end for this year, or rather last year, at any rate.

We traveled by the "home-made" railroad from Ghent, crossed the Schelde in the Ferry steamer, and found ourselves on the quays of Antwerp, surrounded by porters insisting to carry luggage we hadn't got, importunate cabmen, and touts in general. Refusing all the offers of assistance, noisily made us in a language sounding very much like our own, we determined upon finding our way to the Cathedral and Picture Gallery on foot. It was not a prudent course to adopt, as experience proved. A cab would have saved us much trouble, and added no little to our comfort. Wandering about a strange town, the principal streets of which you don't know when you see them, is seldom amusing. Ask any one for Lombard street in the city, and the chances are you will be laughed at for your ignorance. So it was with us in Antwerp when we asked for the Place Verte. Of course everybody knew the Place Verte, and how to get to it; we, who did not, were looked upon as facetious foreigners, wishing to crack a joke at the expense of the innocent natives, who were not, however, to be taken in. "Will you tell me the way to the Place Verte?" I asked, addressing a dirty-looking *blouse.* "That's good,' said the fellow, turning to a friend; 'th y want to know the way to the Place Verte." "Ha, ha," replied the friend, enjoying the joke. We went on, and presently came to a more respectable looking man. "Will you tell me," &c.; but the respectable looking man was deaf, and answered my question by pointing to his ears. At length a perky little officer passed by. "Will you tell me," said I, putting the old query as politely as I could, and this time with success. The officer bowed to the ladies, who had lost all patience—though, to tell the truth, they had insisted upon walking instead of riding—and kindly informed me we might take any turning we pleased—they all led to the Place Verte, which was but a short distance off. We returned the officer's salute, and trudged along. "There's the Cathedral," said one of the travelers, pointing to a tremendous steeple, which appeared to overhang the lane in which we were. It

was a cheering sight, but we were in a labyrinth of lanes, and, as misfortune would have it, took the wrong turning, so that we were longer in getting to the Cathedral than the officer led us to expect we should be. Our destination was reached at last, and we stood in the Place Verte gazing at the massive walls of the sacred edifice with all the heartfelt gratitude and admiration of weary pilgrims. It was a walk to be remembered. We had come through the worst quarter of the town—a sort of Continental Wapping—where cabs are unknown, and the inhabitants of the waterside ways and by-ways of Antwerp indulge in those dirty habits which are peculiar to their class all over the world. Into the Cathedral, by paying one franc each. The sacristan was a man of business. The church doors were locked. He came to open them, but refused to admit us until we showed him the cash. A better doorkeeper never lived. He would be invaluable to any theatrical manager. The pictures, it being All Saints' Day, were unveiled, and the sacristan feared we should see them for nothing, as we could have done had we come into the church during service. But the service was over, and he was anxious to recoup the receipts which had been lost in the morning.

The great attraction in the Cathedral is Rubens's *chef d'œuvre*, "The Descent from the Cross." It hangs, very much too high, in the south transept. Without the aid of opera-glasses it is almost impossible to judge it, and opera-glasses not being among those things you generally take to church with you, the effect of the picture is lost. The composition is said to be borrowed from an Italian print. Its greatest peculiarity is the contrivance of the white sheet on which the body of the Saviour lies; to obtain the contrast between the color of the linen and that of the dead flesh was, very likely, what induced Rubens to adopt the composition. Any other painter would have been afraid of the linen hurting the coloring of the body, but he well knew what effect could be produced by such a contrast.

As Sir Joshua Reynolds says: "None but great colorists can venture to paint pure white linen near flesh; but such know the value of it."

It seems presumptuous, nay, ridiculous, to criticise a work such as this of Rubens', which has been the admiration of the world for ages, but I confess I was disappointed in it in some degree. The expression of all the figures in the picture is hardly consistent with the scene that is represented. They show no signs of grief, nor any sympathy with what is going on. Their features are almost, without exception, in a state of repose, but it is not even the repose of affliction. Then again, the brilliant effect which the coloring undoubtedly once had is lost in a mist of varnish, which appears to be mildewed. Though seen at a great distance, the Christ seems to have been retouched, which may have been the case with the faces of the other figures, and their expression thereby destroyed. The historical anecdote relating to this picture says that it was given in exchange for a piece of ground belonging to the Guild of Arquebusiers on which Rubens built his house, and that the agreement was only for a picture representing their patron, St. Christopher, bearing the infant Christ on his shoulder. Rubens, who wished to surprise the Guild by his generosity, sent five pictures instead of one. All the pictures were intended to refer to the name of their patron Christo—pher. The work was undertaken in 1611, and set up in 1612. While it was in progress, and during the absence of Rubens, the picture was thrown down, and sustained serious injury in the fall. Vandyck, the most skillful among the pupils in Rubens's studio, was chosen to repair the damage, and succeeded so well that the master, on his return, declared that he preferred his scholar's work to his own. There are other splendid paintings in the Cathedral by Rubens. The "Elevation of the Cross" and the "Assumption of Virgin," which latter hangs over the high altar of the choir, being the most important.

After nearly staring our eyes out at these miracles of Art, we left the Cathedral and proceeded to the Picture Gallery. We had come to Antwerp to see pictures, and there were certainly enough to occupy us. Vandyck, Teniers, Rubens, Jordaens, Quentin Matsys, and other mighty masters, all natives of the city, have left treasures in their birth-place which lend a lustre to its name now that its ancient glory has departed. "The 2,500 vessels which, in the days of Charles V., crowded its river, the 500 wagons loaded with merchandise which daily entered its gates, the 500,000,000 guilders annually put into circulation from its mint, and the 5,000 merchants who met twice a day on its Exchange," are all past away, and but few traces remain of the former opulence of the city. The pictures are almost its only riches at the present day indicating the splendor of times gone by, and they indeed shed a light around them—the light of genius which never fades away.

The Gallery is not large, but every picture is a gem. Rubens reigns supreme. His pre-eminence is disputed by Vandyck, who asserts his superiority by some marvelous productions. It is a contest of giants, and the spectator is at a loss to know to whom the palm of victory shall be awarded. There are also some capital Teniers in the collection. It is interesting to observe how cold and feeble a modern work by one Van Bree looks in the company of such gorgeous coloring as that of Rubens and Vandyck. It represents the death of Rubens, and is very popular, as, in fact, is everything connected with the great painter. His chair is kept with the greatest reverence, and the house in which he lived and died is shown as one of the most interesting sights of the city. In the garden stands the pavilion where he painted, and the stone table at which he sat.

From the Picture Gallery to the Church of St. Jacques to see his tomb, which is covered by a slab of white marble let into the pavement of the church. It is situated exactly behind the high altar. In 1793, according to the guide-books, when every other tomb in the church was broken open and pillaged, this alone was respected. Thence to the Church of St. Paul to see a representation of Calvary, which is put up, like a set scene, outside the walls of the building. It is constructed of slag or rock work, and a greater outrage upon common sense was never, perhaps, attempted. On the summit of the artificial eminence is the Crucifixion, at the bottom is a grotto, copied, it is asserted, from the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The body of Christ is seen inside, while near the entrance is a recess representing Hell, with its glowing flames painted on boards, in the midst of which are figures and faces bearing the expression of agony. The approach to Calvary is studded with statues of prophets, angels, saints, and patriarchs. In a city so celebrated for its encouragement of art as Antwerp, it is strange that such a discreditable work as this should be allowed to exist. We entered the church as it was being decorated for some great service that was going to be celebrated. The pew-openers, very shabby looking women, were dressing up the figures of the saints. One, whom I watched with curiosity, was busily employed in sticking a jeweled crown on the head of a doll, which she pulled and knocked about in the most irreverent manner. A lofty canopy, with a black hanging drapery, suspended in the transept of the church, had a very imposing effect, and was well worth studying. There is a wonderful picture by Rubens, "The Scourging of Christ," in St. Paul's Church. It is disagreeable to look at by reason of the faithfulness with which the stripes are marked. There are also other good pictures, and the wood-work round the pulpit and in the side chapels is very fine.

By the time we had gone through with all the sight-seeing in Antwerp we were tired and hungry. As may be supposed, the Gallery, churches, and Mount Calvary made altogether a very hard morning's work. The next and most important consideration was where to dine. The Hotel du Nord looked inviting, and there, accordingly, we rested and ordered dinner. The hotel proved remarkable for nothing but its waiter. The cooking was moderately good, the wines were not bad; but the waiter was the sharpest young rascal I ever met with. When paying the bill, I observed that the wine was charged very much more than the price at which it was in the *carte*. "How's this?" said I to the waiter, pointing to the discrepancy. "Quite right, sir," was the ready reply; "your bill is made out in English money, the *carte* in French." "That explanation is not quite satisfactory," I answered; "you charge eight francs fifty here, and only six francs in the price list." "Just so, sir, eight francs fifty are English money." He stuck to it, and I had to submit to the swindle, which was amusing from the effrontery with which it was perpetrated. After dinner we had to hurry back to the river-side to catch the steamer. This time we took a cab, but should have done better had we walked, for we had learned the way, and the cabman who drove us had forgotten it. He had been celebrating All Saints' Day after his own fashion, and was more or less confused. The lives of many foot-passengers were endangered by his furious driving; but we caught the boat, and, consequently, the train on the other side of the river. We reached Ghent in due course. That night I had but little sleep. A *carillon* in the belfry tower sounded merrily every hour. Notwithstanding the cheerful tune it played, the effect was not agreeable, and I longed for the wind to change to blow the *carillon* into another quarter.

The day after our visit to Antwerp we left Ghent for Calais. It is, I believe, generally supposed that, on foreign railroads, trains go at a snail-pace compared with the speed kept up on English lines. I thought so once, but have had good reason to change my opinion on the subject. I have driven a steam engine between Manchester and Liverpool with Tamberlik as stoker. We went then as hard as the professional driver, whose place we had usurped, would let us. I remember Tamberlik handing sovereigns

to the man to let us go *più presto*, and Cruvelli, who was in the train, putting her head out of the window, terrified at the speed. That was something like flying through the air, but it was nothing to the pace at which we traveled on some parts of the road between Ghent and Calais. There was some special reason for it, I fancy, for such speed can never pay if kept up constantly. While we were tearing on as though the engine had broken loose and defied control, the guard walked along the train, passing from carriage to carriage to collect tickets, as unconcernedly as possible, though by one false step he would have been dashed into eternity.

We alighted at the Railway Station Hotel, in Calais, where, fortunately, I had ordered rooms. It was late at night when we arrived, and the demand by numerous travelers for beds very largely exceeded the possibility of supply. I had telegraphed for three, but the waiter politely informed me they never kept more than two for one family (!); I must go to an hotel in the town if I wished to sleep anywhere. Thanking him for the information, I hastened to secure a lodging for the night. Many other travelers were "left out in the cold," and crowded round the restaurant fire, waiting for the Dover boat to start, or until some present occupant of a bedroom vacated his quarters to go on board, and a room was to be had for half the night.

The next day we proceeded to Boulogne.

The pleasant little town, so gay in summer time, looked dismal enough enveloped in an autumnal sea fog. The Etablissement was partly closed; the bands had ceased to play; the bathing machines were huddled together high up on the strand. The Pavilion Hotel was deserted; its excellent cook had departed and taken up his winter quarters at the Imperial. Some of the summer visitors still lingered on, unwilling or unable to leave the hospitable shores of France. A few of these had formed themselves into sociable *coteries*, and frequented the different *tables d'hote* of the town together. Either from the force of circumstances, or by nature, these agreeable people are simple in their habits. They devote but little time or attention to intellectual pursuits, their chief occupation being eating and drinking, observation of the weather, watching the steamers, and gaining as many threepenny points as their skill and good luck will allow them every evening. Whist is an institution at Boulogne, and seems to be the only power invoked to drive dull care away, although as a means of excitement its strength is very much reduced.

The few days I remained in Boulogne a fair was going on, by which the dullness of the winter season was somewhat enlivened. I went to the fair, and found out that several French Richardsons had opened their booths, and were giving theatrical representations in the style of the popular English manager. There were giants to be seen for a few sous; learned pigs; and a genuine Dulcamara sold his patent medicines, to the sound of drum and fife, from the box-seat of his traveling chemist's shop.

On one booth, which was, unfortunately, closed, I observed an announcement of the performance of what must have very nearly resembled a Miracle Play. The subject of the drama was an incident in the life of Moses, taken from the Old Testament. I inquired why the booth was closed, and was answered by the manager in person. He replied, in very harsh language, that it was not his fault, but that of Moses, who had drank so much the previous night as to be quite unfit to appear before the public. The manager requested me to walk around the booth, and to convince me of the truth of what he said, showed me Moses—a man with a splendid head and beard, who was lying in a state of torpor on a bag of shavings. And now, if you please, we will step on board the Folkestone boat, our sight-seeing on the Continent being at an end.

WALTER MAYNARD.

FIDDLES AND THE FIDDLE-TRADE.

No man who is not a fiddler can be fully aware of the virtues that reside in a fiddle. To the majority of mankind, the thing is but a vibratory machine of thin wood, furnished with tightened strings of catgut for the production of musical sounds; and the non-fiddling portion of the community are apt to entertain a derogatory notion both of fiddles and fiddlers, as though there were something unaccordant with the dignity of human nature in the production of melody by shaking the elbow and twiddling the fingers. Not that they by any means object to the result produced, or refuse to listen to the harmonious combination of sounds which horsehair and resin elicit, or refrain at all times from responding to the invitation of the music by tripping through the mazes of the delightful dance; but they wouldn't be seen to operate themselves; they could not submit to be themselves the fiddlers. A small section of society—a dismal, dolorous, and drab-hearted community, go still further. With them, the terms "to play the fiddle" and "to play the fool" are synonymous; the notes of a fiddle-string sound irreligiously in their ears, and they look upon fiddlers as persons in a highly equivocal, not to say dangerous position. But the truth is, these people don't know what a fiddle is. I do, and I have therefore the advantage of them.

I am the owner of a Straduarius which cost me nearly £200, and is worth more than double the money. I have insured it in the "Equitable" for the sum it cost—I couldn't rest in my bed till I had done so. How it came into my possession—what risks I ran—what sacrifices I made to get it—what danger I was in of losing it forever: these are particulars which I may record at some future time. At present, I am about to say something of fiddles and the fiddle trade in general, for the benefit of the world at large and my brother-amateurs (I am not a professional musician) in particular.

All the world—at least all the musical world—knows that the finest fiddles which the art of man has ever achieved, were made by the Cremonese masters 200 and odd years ago. What all the world does not know so well is the fact, that though these masters, Amati, Straudarius, and the rest, made but comparatively few instruments, these have somehow so miraculously multiplied since their death, that at this present moment, when, according to the ordinary course of things, they ought almost to have vanished from the earth, they abound in such prodigious numbers, that there is not a dealer in one of the great cities of Europe who has not always one or two specimens, at least, upon hand to dispose of. I am of opinion that this is owing, not so much to the merit of the Cremona fiddles, transcendently excellent as most of them are, as it is to the existence of a class of men of whom the reader knows but little or nothing. It is with the great fiddle-makers as with the Raphaels, Titians, Correggios, and Rembrandts, in another art; their works are so tremendously in request among the connoisseurs, that they have to be manufactured anew to meet the demand. It is the credulity and ignorance of the collectors which have instigated the forgeries in both cases.

As your connoisseur in art is never a painter, though he knows the constituents of megilp, and can daub a bolster-looking cloud; so your connoisseur in fiddles is never a performer, unless the ability to rasp a quadrille or a polka is to entitle him to that designation. But the collector of fiddles, it is probable, derives as much pleasure from his accumulations as his brother of the studios. He gloats over the torso of an old instrument, and feels the same raptures on contemplating the graceful swell of the "belly," as my lord-connoisseur does in the presence of an antique marble or a Venus of Titian. And as there are rival connoisseurs in art who bid and buy frantically against one another, so are there rivals in the fiddle-mania who do precisely the same thing. One consequence of this is, that fiddle-dealing is a snug money-making profession, the more pretentious branch of which is monopolized in London by a few old stagers, but which is carried on profitably in all the large towns. There is, for instance, Old Borax, whom those who want him know whereabouts to look for—within the shadow of St. Martin's Church.

Borax makes but little demonstration of his wealth in the dingy hole that serves him for a shop, where a double-bass, a couple of violoncellos, a tenor or two hanging on the walls, and half-a-dozen fiddles, lying among a random collection of bows, bridges, coils of catgut, packets of purified resin, and tangled horsehair in skeins, serve for the insignia of his profession. But Borax never does business in his shop, which is a dusty desert from one week's end to another. His warehouse is a private sanctum on the first floor, where you will find him in his easy chair reading the morning paper, if he does not happen to be engaged with a client. Go to him for a fiddle, or carry him a fiddle for his opinion, and you will hardly fail to acknowledge that you stand in the presence of a first-rate judge. The truth is, that fiddles of all nations, disguised and sophisticated as they may be to deceive common observers, are naked and self-confessed in his hands. Dust, dirt, varnish and bees-wax are thrown away upon him; he knows the work of every man, of note or of no note, whether English, French, Dutch, German, Spaniard or Italian, who ever sent a fiddle into the market, for the last 200 years; and he will tell you who is the fabricator of your treasure, and the rank he holds in the fiddle-making world, with the utmost readiness and urbanity—on payment of his fee of one guinea.

Borax is the pink of politeness, though a bit of a martinet after an ancient and punctilious model. If you go to select a fiddle from his stock, you may escape a lecture of a quarter of an hour by *calling* it a fiddle, and not a violin, which is a word he detests, and is apt to excite his wrath. He is never in a hurry to sell, and will by no means allow you to conclude a bargain until he has put you in complete possession of the virtues and the failings, if it have any, of the instrument for which you are to pay a round